

Behind Turkey's Attack on the Afrin Kurds: Imperialist Machinations in the Middle East

February 7, 2018



The danger of nuclear war is present today more than ever with Trump's threats against North Korea and Iran. Without precedent in US history, the president openly states that he is willing to wage war and destroy a nation for US interests, disregarding his allies' wishes. Trump not only follows the advice of his buddy Benjamin Netanyahu about the Iran nuclear deal, but he also announces that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. He remains ahead of schedule on the opening of the US embassy there as well as cutting off funding for Mahmoud Abbas for a Palestinian state, unless he bows to Israel and respects Trump. At same time, his military commander General Jim Mattis announces that the US should be ready for war at any moment.

It is at this contradictory juncture, the triangle of the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, that we can see the beginnings of war with Iran, adding yet another front to the war being led by Erdogan in his attacks on the Kurdish people of northern Syria in Afrin.

We must defend Afrin from the aggressive and reactionary government of Erdogan before it is able to move on the rest of Rojava. These reactionary governments, along with or on behalf of imperialism, are ready to destroy any progressive movements in the Middle East in order to keep themselves in power.

We should condemn this illegal invasion by the Turkish army under the false pretense of a fight against "terrorism" in the Syrian Kurdish region of Afrin. The Kurds earned the world's respect for defeating ISIS with their courageous freedom fighters.

Erdogan's attack could not have been launched without the approval of Russia, which controls the airspace over Afrin. In fact, Russia moved its troops out of Afrin as Turkish warplanes bombed the Syrian Kurdish militia group YPG and also its parent organization, the PYD.

"According to officials in Afrin, Russia proposed to protect Afrin in return for handing over control to the Assad regime. But as the offer was rejected, Russia gave green light to Turkey's invasion. The United States, meanwhile, which conveniently used the Kurds as 'reliable boots on the ground' in Syria for the last years in the international anti-ISIS coalition, stays quiet over their NATO ally's ambitions to sacrifice the heroes of the ISIS war, merely warning Turkey to 'avoid civilian casualties.'" (*Roar Magazine*, Jan. 24, 2018)

For years, Erdogan and the Turkish government were not bothered by the jihadism of ISIS (or Al Qaeda's brutal beheadings) and the rape of women on the Syrian-Turkish border. Turkey even called the Kurds "terrorists," while staying silent about the danger of Kobane falling into the hands of ISIS in 2014. This is because they saw a multi-ethnic and democratic movement of liberation-oriented women from a grassroots organization, which happened to take root in Rojava, as more

threatening to their government than ISIS. And now that these heroic Peshmerga drove ISIS out, Turkey is trying to do what the jihadists could not do themselves: kill off the democratic feminist alternative form of self-governance in the Middle East, all this with the approval of Iran and Russia with the consent of the US, and after the uprising in Iran that could affect all progressive movements, whether in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and around the world. They call this massacre “Operation Olive Branch” for “Democracy and Peace” and the “War on Terror.”

Is the historic genocide of the Armenian people to be repeated in front of our eyes with the Kurds? Given this threat, the least we can do is to offer solidarity with the progressive, multi-ethnic people of northern Syria for the future possibility of a democratic alternative in the Middle East based on justice and freedom, something that could evolve into an anti-capitalist humanist alternative. The Kurdish people of Afrin can depend only on international solidarity and the comradeship of progressive forces who stand for an anti-capitalist alternative.

This was a Speech at the Coalition for Peace, Revolution and Social Justice's January 26 banner drop marking "Year 2 of Trump: LA Rise Up!" originally posted at the CPRSJ website.